

LDS Church's welfare program earns praise

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SALT LAKE CITY — Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been counseled since the Great Depression of the 1930s about the importance of self-reliance and taking care of themselves and others.

Accordingly, it wasn't surprising to see one of the nation's best-known conservative organizations, the Heritage Foundation, praise the church's welfare program in its current edition of Policy Review.

The quarterly publication said the church's welfare program pro-

vides material necessities while focusing on "strengthening the family, teaching a vigorous work ethic, and helping the needy to help themselves. Its themes are ones the secular world would do well to study."

Tucker Carlson, assistant editor of Policy Review, said a sign of the church's welfare program's success is that able-bodied people become independent in an average of about 100 days.

"Compare this to the federal welfare system in which half of the families ... will remain on the dole for 10 years. The explicit aim of Mormon welfare is to wean people from it. That it succeeds is its greatest achievement," Carlson said.

Keith B. McMullin, managing director of the church's Welfare Services Department said, "Church leaders have long taught church members to care for themselves and to care for others. Additionally, church leaders have always stressed self-reliance and the importance of giving rather than receiving."

Former church President Heber J. Grant said in 1936 during the formulative stages of the church's welfare program that the purpose of the welfare program was "to set up, insofar as it might be possible, a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, an

independence, industry, thrift, and self-respect be once more established with our people. The aim of the church is to help the people help themselves. Work is to be reenthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our church membership."

Carlson quoted former Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Constance Horner as saying, "People in need want to be connected to family and community. The Mormon Church recognizes these ordinary human facts. Our governmental social welfare systems, which isolate those in need and reinforce dependence, do not."

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